

Human Research Ethics Requirements Checklist for Graduate Students

Please read carefully over this document to determine whether your proposal for either a capstone essay or a thesis/dissertation study requires institutional research ethics review.

Simon Fraser University is governed by SFU Policy R20.01 and the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2): Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. All SFU affiliated researchers (including graduate students, faculty, and staff) conducting research with human participants (as defined in the TCPS2) are required to do two things:

1. Complete the [TCPS2 tutorial 'CORE'](#). This is an online tutorial that takes approximately 3 hours to complete.
2. Obtain institutional ethics approval from the SFU Research Ethics Board (REB) PRIOR to conducting their research.

If you are doing any of the following your study likely requires institutional ethical review at SFU:

- › Interviews, even if you are interviewing a public figure or expert about their work
- › Focus groups
- › Administration of a questionnaire or survey
- › Administration of psychological or educational tests
- › Naturalistic observation in real or virtual settings
- › Participant observation or ethnographic fieldwork
- › Secondary use of pre-existing data, examples include medical records, research data, survey data, or program evaluation data
- › Behavioural or psychological experiments
- › Analysis of laboratory, physiological, kinesiological, or biological data
- › Linking data from existing databases
- › Administration of testing of drugs, medical devices, medical imaging or diagnostic techniques
- › Analysis of blood or other biological specimens

NOTE: The SFU REB does not issue retroactive approvals. For this reason it is imperative that you determine whether your project requires ethics approval prior to starting your research. Ethics approval from SFU is required even if you have obtained ethics approval from another institution to conduct the research.

Research exempt from institutional ethics review

Some research is exempt from REB review where protections are available by other means. If you think that your research meets one of these exemptions please ensure that you read the relevant article of the TCSP2:

1. If you are obtaining information about policies, practices or procedures from an official representative of an organization who is appointed to provide this information as part of his or her regular duties (e.g. a communications officer) and no personal opinions are solicited, these individuals are not seen to fit the definition of a human research participant under the TCPS2 (see Application section, [Article 2.1](#)) and interviews conducted in this context do not require institutional ethics review.
2. [TCPS Article 2.2](#) Research does not require REB review when it relies exclusively on information that is:
 - a. publicly available through a mechanism set out by legislation or regulation and that is protected by law; or
 - b. in the public domain and the individuals to whom the information refers have no reasonable expectation of privacy.
3. [TCPS Article 2.3](#) REB review is not required for research involving the observation of people in public places where:
 - a. it does not involve any intervention staged by the researcher, or direct interaction with the individuals or groups;
 - b. individuals or groups targeted for observation have no reasonable expectation of privacy; and
 - c. any dissemination of research results does not allow identification of specific individuals.
4. [TCPS Article 2.4](#) REB review is not required for research that relies exclusively on secondary use of anonymous information, or anonymous human biological materials, so long as the process of data linkage or recording or dissemination of results does not generate identifiable information.
5. [TCPS Article 2.5](#) Quality assurance and quality improvement studies, program evaluation activities, and performance reviews, or testing within normal educational requirements when used exclusively for assessment, management or improvement purposes, do not constitute research for the purposes of this Policy, and do not fall within the scope of REB review.
6. [TCPS Article 2.6](#) Creative practice activities, in and of themselves, do not require REB review. However, research that employs creative practice to obtain responses from participants that will be analyzed to answer a research question is subject to REB review.

If an exemption is thought to be applicable, you must contact [SFU Research Ethics](#) prior to beginning the project with a brief explanation of your project and which article it falls under.

If you are in any doubt as to whether your study requires institutional ethics review or have any other ethics related questions please contact SFU Research Ethics at dore@sfu.ca